

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1 1. A method for dictating the order that print jobs received over multiple
 2 data channels are printed, comprising:
 3 assigning priority values to data channels that receive print jobs;
 4 associating the priority value assigned to the data channel with the
 5 print jobs received at its respective data channel; and
 6 printing the print jobs in an order corresponding to their associated
 7 priority values.

1 2. The method of Claim 1, wherein assigning a priority value comprises
 2 assigning a different priority value to each data channel that receives the print jobs.

1 3. The method of Claim 1, wherein assigning a priority value comprises
 2 assigning two or more of the data channels equal priority values, and wherein
 3 printing the print jobs comprises printing the print jobs received via the two or more
 4 data channels having equal priority values in an order in which they were received
 5 via the data channels.

1 4. The method of Claim 1, wherein printing the print jobs in an order
 2 corresponding to their associated priority values comprises printing the print jobs in
 3 an order from highest priority to lowest priority.

1 5. The method of Claim 1, wherein at least one of the data channels is
 2 dedicated as an internal print data channel to receive internally-generated print jobs.

1 6. The method of Claim 5, wherein assigning the priority value to the data
 2 channel that receives print jobs comprises assigning the internal print data channel
 3 the highest possible priority.

1 7. The method of Claim 1, wherein assigning the priority value to the data
2 channel comprises assigning a priority value to each of the data channels that
3 receives a different predefined group of print job types.

1 8. The method of Claim 1, further comprising:
2 determining whether a plurality of the print jobs currently pending have
3 equivalent associated priority values; and
4 printing the print jobs that have the equivalent associated priority
5 values in an order in which they were received via their respective data channels.

1 9. The method of Claim 8, further comprising determining the order in
2 which the print jobs having equivalent associated priority values were received by
3 monitoring time of arrival of the print jobs.

1 10. The method of Claim 8, further comprising determining the order in
2 which the print jobs having equivalent associated priority values were received by
3 queuing the print jobs having equivalent associated priority values in a first-in-first-
4 out arrangement.

1 11. The method of Claim 1, further comprising queuing the print jobs in an
2 increasing order according to their respective priority values, and forwarding the
3 print jobs to a print engine for printing in the order in which the print jobs are
4 queued.

1 12. The method of Claim 1, further comprising queuing the print jobs in an
2 order of receipt of the print jobs, and sending the print jobs to a print engine for
3 printing in a sequential order corresponding to the respective priority values
4 associated with the print jobs.

1 13. The method of Claim 1, wherein assigning the priority value comprises
2 assigning the priority value upon initialization of a printing device designated for
3 printing the print jobs.

1 14. The method of Claim 1, wherein assigning the priority value comprises
2 assigning the priority value via a user interface by a user granted authority to
3 reassign the priority values to selected ones of the data channels.

1 15. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable
2 instructions for performing steps comprising:
3 assigning priority values to data channels that receive print jobs;
4 associating the priority value assigned to the data channel with the
5 print jobs received at its respective data channel; and
6 printing the print jobs in an order corresponding to their associated
7 priority values.

1 16. A printing device coupled to receive print jobs transmitted by one or
2 more computing devices, the printing device comprising:
3 a plurality of data channels to receive the print jobs, wherein the data
4 channels are assigned respective priority values, and wherein the print jobs received
5 at the data channels assumes the priority value of its respective one of the data
6 channels;
7 a compare module coupled to receive the priority values
8 corresponding the received print jobs and to identify the print job exhibiting the
9 highest priority; and
10 a print engine to print the print jobs in an order from the highest priority
11 to the lowest priority as identified by the compare module.

1 17. The printing device as in Claim 16, further comprising one or more
2 print queues coupled to receive and output the print jobs in an order received,
3 wherein the print jobs are received in the order of the highest priority to the lowest
4 priority.

1 18. The printing device as in Claim 16, further comprising one or more
2 print queues coupled to receive the print jobs in an order received, and to output the
3 print jobs in an order corresponding to their respective priority values.

1 19. The printing device as in Claim 16, further comprising a job monitor
2 module coupled to the plurality of data channels to receive and store the priority
3 values associated with the print jobs that are currently pending.

1 20. The printing device as in Claim 19, wherein the compare module is
2 coupled to the job monitor module to receive the stored priority values, and to
3 identify the print job exhibiting the highest priority in response thereto.

1 21. The printing device as in Claim 16, wherein the plurality of data
2 channels comprise an internal print data channel in which internally-generated print
3 jobs are received.

1 22. The printing device as in Claim 21, wherein the internal print data
2 channel is preassigned to the highest priority in a range of the priority values.

1 23. The printing device as in Claim 22, further comprising a user interface
2 coupled to the internal print data channel to allow a user to select print features to
3 initiate the internally-generated print jobs.

1 24. The printing device as in Claim 23, further comprising an internal print
2 module to generate the internally-generated print jobs corresponding to the selected
3 print features.

1 25. The printing device as in Claim 16, wherein the priority of the print job
2 is inversely proportional to the priority value associated with the print job.

1 26. A printing system for printing data transmitted via print jobs, the
2 system comprising:

3 one or more computing devices arranged in a network, wherein the
4 one or more computing devices transmit the print jobs over the network;

5 a printing device coupled to the network to receive the print jobs
6 transmitted by the one or more computing device, the printing device comprising:

7 (a) a plurality of data channels to receive the print jobs, wherein the
8 data channels are assigned a priority value, and wherein the print jobs
9 received at the data channels assume the priority value of its respective one
10 of the data channels;

11 (b) a compare module to receive the priority values corresponding to
12 the received print jobs and to identify the print job exhibiting the highest
13 priority; and

14 (c) a print engine to print the print jobs in an order from the highest
15 priority to the lowest priority as identified by the compare module.

1 27. The printing system as in Claim 26, wherein each of the data channels
2 is assigned a different priority value.

1 28. The printing system as in Claim 26, wherein each of the data channels
2 corresponds to a predefined group of print job types.

1 29. A method of dictating the order in which print jobs are printed on a
2 printing device, comprising:
3 providing a plurality of data channels to receive print jobs, wherein the
4 data channels receive predefined groups of print job types;
5 assigning a priority value to the data channels that receive print jobs;
6 associating the priority value of the data channels with the print jobs
7 received at the respective one of the data channels;
8 determining relative priorities of the print jobs based on their
9 associated priority values;
10 printing the print jobs in a sequence corresponding to the relative
11 priorities associated with the print jobs.

1 30. The method of Claim 29, wherein printing the print jobs in a sequence
2 comprises printing the print jobs in a sequence of highest priority to lowest priority.

1 31. The method of Claim 29, further comprising:
2 designating one of the data channels as an internal print data channel
3 to receive internally-generated print jobs; and
4 pre-assigning a priority value to the internal print data channel that
5 represents the highest possible priority value of a priority value range of priority
6 values.

1 32. The method of Claim 29, wherein assigning the priority values to the
2 data channels comprises assigning the priority values upon initialization of the
3 printing device in accordance with a predetermined priority assignment.

1 33. The method of Claim 29, wherein assigning the priority values to the
2 data channels comprises assigning the priority values via a user interface to apply
3 user-selected priorities to particular ones of the data channels.

1 34. The method of Claim 29, wherein determining relative priorities of the
2 print jobs comprises comparing the priority values of the print jobs that are currently
3 pending to each other.

1 35. A computer-readable program storage medium tangibly embodying a
2 program of instructions executable by a print server system to process print jobs by
3 performing steps comprising:

4 assigning priority values to a plurality of data channels that receive
5 print jobs;

6 associating the priority value assigned to each data channel with print
7 jobs received at its respective data channel;

8 determining relative priorities of a plurality of print jobs based on their
9 associated priority values; and

10 printing print jobs in a sequence corresponding to the relative priorities
11 associated with the print jobs.

1 36. A printing device coupled to receive print jobs transmitted by one or
2 more computing devices, the printing device comprising:

3 a plurality of data channels to receive the print jobs;

4 means for assigning a priority value to the data channels;

5 means for attributing the priority value of the data channels to the print
6 jobs received via its respective one of the data channels;

7 means for comparing the priority values of the print jobs that are
8 pending, and for identifying the print job exhibiting the highest priority; and

9 means for printing the print jobs in an order from the highest priority to
10 the lowest priority.

1 37. The printing device as in Claim 36, further comprising means for
2 queuing the print jobs in the order from the highest priority to the lowest priority.